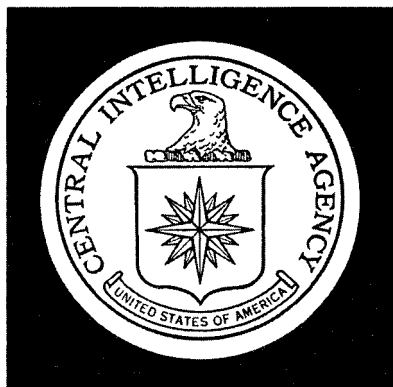


Top Secret (71)

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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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Information as of 1600
16 February 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

US units participating in Operation SAM HOUSTON in the central highlands of western Pleiku Province continue to report heavy contact with the enemy.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Heavy contact is continuing in the central highlands of western Pleiku Province in Operation SAM HOUSTON (Para. 1). Operation DECK HOUSE VI began on 16 February in southeastern Quang Ngai Province (Paras. 2-3). Viet Cong guerrillas fired on a US minesweeper for the second straight day (Para. 4). An ARVN company reported contact with a company-size Communist force in northern Thua Thien Province on 15 February (Para. 5). A South Vietnamese outpost just north of Quang Ngai city was overrun on 15 February (Para. 6). A recently captured Communist document reveals that leadership and morale problems as well as illness are hampering North Vietnamese Army units (Paras. 9-13).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
With 65 of its 117 members present, the Constituent Assembly reconvened on 14 February (Paras. 1-3).

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III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Jacques Moalic, the AFP correspondent in Hanoi reports that the North Vietnamese are continuing steadfast in

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their general opposition to talks (Paras. 1-3). Chinese diplomats in Hanoi have committed a number of anti-Soviet acts (Paras. 4-5).

VI. Other Major Aspects: The Communists are using a combined road and river route in the Laos panhandle to move supplies past the heavily interdicted Route 96 (Paras. 1-3).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Contact between Communist troops and units of the US 4th Infantry Division participating in Operation SAM HOUSTON in the central highlands of western Pleiku Province has continued. On 15 February sporadic fighting was reported for more than 11 hours. American forces were under heavy mortar and small-arms fire with losses of eight killed, 23 wounded, and two missing. Communist losses during these recent encounters now number at least 74 killed.

2. Operation DECK HOUSE VI began on 16 February with an amphibious landing on the coastal salt flats of Quang Ngai Province by a one-battalion US Marine Special Landing Force. The Marines met no resistance as they deployed inland in search of fortified Viet Cong bunkers and trenches which have been reported to dot this densely-populated region. The operation is to sweep this area of the province in search of enemy forces as well as installations.

3. The coastal flatland of southeastern Quang Ngai Province is suspected to be a main Viet Cong infiltration point for seaborne supplies and a major infiltration route for the movement of these supplies. A total of 5,700 Communist troops--including elements of the 22nd North Vietnamese Army Regiment--are believed within or near the area of the operation.

4. For the second consecutive day, Viet Cong guerrillas fired on a US minesweeper on the Long Tau River between Saigon and the South China Sea. Two rounds of 57-mm. recoilless rifle fire hit the ship. The minesweeper reversed course and was being escorted upstream by several patrol boats when another group of guerrillas fired small-arms and automatic weapons at the boats. Five Americans were wounded in the two encounters.

5. In northern Thua Thien Province, a South Vietnamese Army company established contact with an estimated company-size Communist force on 15 February. US artillery supported the South Vietnamese and forced the enemy to withdraw. South Vietnamese losses were reported as four killed, six wounded, and two missing. Enemy losses were not reported.

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6. A South Vietnamese outpost located several miles north of Quang Ngai City was attacked by an estimated two enemy companies on 15 February. The enemy penetrated the installation--manned by two platoons--under cover of heavy small-arms, automatic weapons, and mortar fire. A reaction force finally repelled the attackers. Friendly casualties were reported as eight killed, 11 wounded, and seven missing. Enemy losses are unknown.

7. On 14 February, Operation HAI SON 5/67, a one-day South Vietnamese search-and-destroy operation in the Mekong Delta province of Kien Giang resulted in sporadic contact with Viet Cong troops. The three South Vietnamese Army battalions participating in this operation reported casualties of one killed and three wounded. Enemy losses were 29 killed, nineteen Communist suspects were detained, and 16 weapons, 3,000 rounds of ammunition, and various items of military equipment were captured.

8. Elements of the large multibattalion search-and-destroy Operation TUCSON, currently sweeping the jungle area of northwestern Binh Duong Province, reported the discovery of a large Viet Cong rice cache on 15 February. The cache--225 tons of bagged, polished local rice--will be evacuated. Little contact with enemy forces has been reported since this operation began on 13 February.

Leadership Problems in Communist Regiment

9. A captured document, containing a resolution adopted by the party committee of an unidentified Viet Cong or North Vietnamese Army regiment during a conference held on 28 and 29 December 1966, reveals that the unit was suffering from problems of inadequate leadership, poor morale, and continuing high rates of illness.

10. The location of the document's capture--Phuoc Long Province--and references to the troops' unfamiliarity with "the present war" despite their long combat experience suggest that the regiment may be either the

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165th or the 52nd of the 7th NVA Division, both of which infiltrated Phuoc Long in the summer or fall of 1966. In addition, emphasis in the document on the prevention of disease ties in with information available on the 165th Regiment, which has reportedly lost much of its manpower through illness.

11. According to the document, cadre at various levels of the unit displayed "rightist," pessimistic attitudes and were not well-prepared for their leadership tasks. Ideological guidance was inefficient and impractical, and plans for troop indoctrination were discontinued. In addition, troops were poorly disciplined, preparation for combat was slow, and close coordination during combat was lacking.

12. In connection with medical problems, the document refers to a resolution adopted in October outlining measures to be taken to decrease the illness rate, improve medical treatment of sick and wounded, and in general, increase the percentage of healthy, combat-ready troops. Although the program apparently achieved some successes and raised the number of combat-ready troops to 60 percent--the goal was 70 percent--the document admits to continuing problems. These include irresponsibility on the part of medical personnel and late medical attention, resulting in unnecessary deaths.

13. Among corrective measures for the leadership and ideological difficulties of the regiment, the resolution recommends reindoctrination of the cadre and soldiers and the development of party chapters at various levels, with an emphasis on instilling responsibility in the cadre and overcoming pessimistic attitudes. The resolution further orders that the regiment concentrate first on small-scale military actions in an effort to familiarize itself with "the present war" and on consolidating its capabilities before undertaking large-scale operations.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. On 14 February, in its first session following a 10-day Tet recess, the Constituent Assembly, with 65 of its 117 members present, approved articles 37 through 40 and most of article 36 of the proposed constitution. The articles all deal with the legislative branch of government.

2. Article 37, an entirely new article, stipulates that representatives or senators may be removed from office for treason or other serious crimes by three-fourths vote of the house concerned. Article 38, in its final version, empowers the national assembly to vote legislation, ratify treaties and international agreements, determine war declarations and peace talks, declare a state of war, validate the election of legislators, and "control the government in the implementation of national policy." The precise interpretation of the latter power is unclear. The provisions of the initial draft covering the emergency powers and the authority to vote no confidence in the government were dropped from the present version, but will be discussed in other sections of the constitution.

3. Article 39 empowers each house of the legislature and the committee chairmen to summon the prime minister and cabinet officials to answer questions on the execution of government policy. Under article 40, the senate can investigate the execution of national policy and request public agencies to produce documents relevant to such investigations.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Jacques Moalic, the AFP correspondent in Hanoi, has given the US consul general in Hong Kong his impressions of the situation in North Vietnam after the first four months of his tour there. Moalic stressed that he was isolated from North Vietnamese sources and that conversations with equally isolated European Communists were his main sources. He has been permitted to travel outside Hanoi on only the four occasions when he was taken to see damage caused to civilian areas by US raids.

2. Moalic felt that the North Vietnamese in general had a high sense of nationality and a "tough, stubborn, resilient nature." Despite these attributes, he felt that the effect of the recent poor harvest coupled with the generally primitive economy might have been a factor strongly influencing Hanoi's recent willingness to consider the possibility of talks. He did not believe, however, that Hanoi's demand for a unilateral cessation of US air strikes as a precondition for talks would be weakened in the foreseeable future, mainly because of the almost pathological mistrust of the US by the North Vietnamese.

3. Moalic felt that the US bombings had played a subordinate role to the above factors in Hanoi's economic problems and that their major effects were to create difficulties in the movement of foreign supplies from ports to the countryside and to divert manpower from productive work to rebuilding roads and bridges.

Chinese in Hanoi Commit Anti-Soviet Acts

4. According to the AFP correspondent in Hanoi, the publicized demonstration which Chinese Embassy

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officials staged at the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi on 30 January were supplemented by anti-Soviet posters on the walls of the Chinese Embassy. In addition, the Chinese military attaché created a scene at a recent DRV briefing of Communist military attachés by loudly berating his Soviet colleague. A DRV Foreign Ministry official privately told the AFP correspondent that Hanoi was "considerably embarrassed" over these incidents, but when the DRV Foreign Ministry quietly complained to the Chinese over the anti-Soviet demonstration, the embassy showed little regard for Vietnamese sensibilities and claimed that it had no connection with this "spontaneous outburst of indignation by Chinese citizens."

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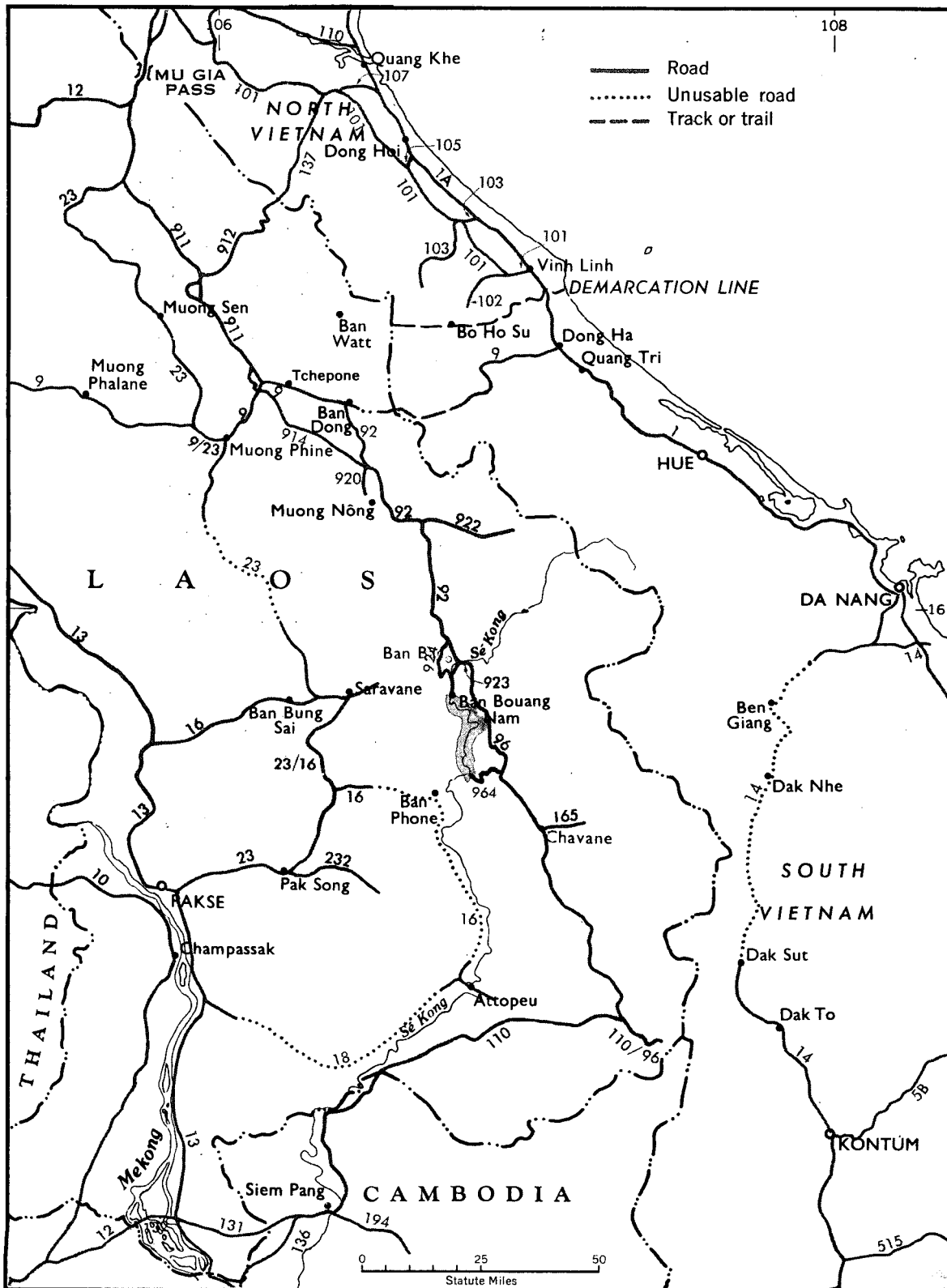
6. Peking condemned Soviet Premier Kosygin's visit to the UK as an "open betrayal" of the Vietnamese people in an NCNA broadcast of 14 February. The broadcast repeated Peking's familiar theme that the Soviet leader was aiding the US "peace talks scheme." President Johnson was accused of being the "wirepuller" behind the Kosygin-Wilson talks, and he was said to have postponed the resumption of the bombing of the DRV in coordination with Kosygin's activities in London.

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LAOS PANHANDLE



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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The Communists are now using a combined road/river alternate route to move supplies past steadily bombed infiltration Route 96. The alternate route, which combines Route 924, more than 50 miles of the Se Kong River and newly constructed Route 964, is apparently being used for almost all North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao supplies presently being sent south from above Ban Bac to the vicinity of Chavane.

2. Ground observers on the section of the alternate route using the Se Kong in early February have reported seeing convoys of loaded pirogues moving southward. On 1 February, 50 such watercraft reportedly passed the observers during one four-hour period.

3. Although record numbers of trucks were observed during the recent Tet cease-fire in the Mu Gia Pass area, comparable heavy supply activity has not been reported south of Route 23. The use of the Se Kong in early February probably reflected Communist efforts to exploit high water conditions on that river to move farther south supplies which were introduced into the panhandle at an earlier time.

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